

CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY
CAHOKIA · ILLINOIS ·

HABS NO. 25-6

St. Clair Co.

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings
PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
CENTRAL ILLINOIS DISTRICT NO. 25

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
EDGAR E. LUNDEEN DISTRICT OFFICER
BLOOMINGTON ILLINOIS

APR 11 1964
FOLLOWS

The Church of The Holy Family, Cahokia, St. Clair County,
Illinois.

by Otis Winn, Murphysboro, Illinois, April 1934

The Mission was established and maintained by missionaries from the Seminary of Foreign Missions located at Quebec, Canada. This Seminary was founded by LAVAL, its first bishop, and its formation and work was inspired and patterned after the Seminary of Foreign Missions in Paris, France, where LAVAL received his religious training.

The first of their clergymen sent from the Mission to the Indian Villages at Cahokia was Father JOHN BERGER. He arrived in the summer of 1694 and soon after got into difficulty with the Indian Medicine Men and died.

Father JEAN FRANCOIS BUSSION DE ST. COSME was the first of the Fathers of the Foreign Missions to establish the permanent mission of the TAMAROIS (Indian tribes of the group of tribes known as the Illinois) known since as the Mission of the Holy Family Church and located in what afterwards became and still remains as Cahokia. On December 7, 1699 he and his companions arrived at the village of the TAMAROIS, and celebrated at their mass on the 8th of December, the Feast of The Immaculate Conception. They departed the same day for the lower Mississippi. Father ST. COSME returned to the TAMAROIS village a short time later and established the

Mission. The exact date is not recorded, but is known to be either on the last days of 1699 or by Spring of 1700.

The village at the time was as large as Quebec and the largest Indian Village encountered by the missionaries.

Available records indicate that ST. COSME'S authoritative successor was Father DOMINEC MARY VARLET, a doctor of the Sarbonne. He arrived probably in 1712, and was a zealous and laborious missionary for nearly six years. Working with VARLET at the same time and place was Father PHILLIP BOUCHER.

Following Fathers VARLET and BOUCHER were Fathers DOMINEC THAUMURE DE LA SOURCE and L. MERCIER. Their service at Cahokia began about 1719 and likely ended shortly before 1739 because by that date Father CHARLEVOIX, a Sulpitian Priest was pastor of and in charge of the Mission.

Available records reveal that the following priests were in charge of the Cahokia Mission:

In the year 1740,	Father LAWRANT;
" " "	1754, Father FORGET
" " "	1784, Father BERNARD
" " "	1787, Father P. DEVRINS
" " "	1790, Father GIBRAULT
" " "	1792, Father LEDU
" " "	1793, Father LAVADOUX, V. G.
" " "	1797, Father LUSSON
" " "	1799, Father OLIVER
" " "	1805, Father DONATIAN OLIVER

In the year 1807, Father J. B. DIDIER

" " " 1810, Father M. JOS. DURAND

" " " 1810, Father URBAN GILLET

" " " 1812, Father SAVINE

" " " 1826, Father DOM. LAMBIER

" " " 1827, Father J. A. LUTZ

" " " 1828, Father SAUSSOIR

At this time (1828) Cahokia numbered 160 families or about 800 persons.

Following Father SAUSSOIR came Father DONTRELIGNE, a member of the LAZARIST Fathers from the barrens in Missouri. His successor was Father LOISEL after whose death Father DONTRELIGNE returned to Cahokia. He established another church at CENTREVILLE STATION (about six miles from BELLEVILLE) and later established his residence there. His successor as pastor of the Cahokia Church was Father LANDRY from Canada, who died in 1878. LANDRY was followed by Father KEMPER, who at the time my latest available document was written in 1881 was in charge of both the CAHOKIA and CENTREVILLE STATION churches.

In the available documents, no description of the church building has been found. However PENICAUT describes a few details of the Indian Missionary house of worship located at Kaskaskia in 1712, and from the present form of the Cahokia church and its indications of its former form the two churches were likely quite similar in form and construction. According

to PENICAUT "They have in their village a large church in which there is a baptismal font. This church is very neat within; there are three Chapels, one in the middle and two on the sides. They have a belfrey with a bell in it."

Of the present Holy Family old church building, only a small portion of the original remains. It is that portion about the present stage which was formerly the apse. The construction of this portion of the building is of a kind typical to the early French pioneers and is known as "palisade" because of the peculiar wall construction which consisted of posts or dressed timbers planted firmly in the ground and in a line, with spaces left between each up-right member. The voids were later filled with a mixture of clay and chopped straw. The corners were firmly braced by inclined members and the wall was then given many coats of white wash both inside and outside, until a rough plaster-like coating was formed. Originally the roof, following the usual early French practice was likely of thatch and quite steep.

From present indications of its past form the building likely consisted of a nave and apse and two chapels forming a cruciform plan. There might originally have been a narthex or vestibule and possibly a sacristy behind the apse. However the sacristy seems to have been added later and the front or north portion is so altered that its original form cannot be definitely determined upon. At one time there was an open

belfry over the north end of the main building and a covered porch with slender columns protecting the front (north) entrance. The belfry has been removed and the porch sealed, forming an enclosed vestibule. The bell of the old church is now used in the new church building.

Originally the walls of all of the building were undoubtedly of "palisade" construction. At present the building is of frame construction and has a metal roof. The roof trusses appear to be similar in construction to those being built in this locality about 1800. Some of these trusses were no doubt made at an earlier date. Some are replacement trusses necessitated by damage to the building by fire.

At present the building is used as a Community house. The nave now serves as the auditorium; the apse has become the stage; the sacristy has been transformed into a kitchen and the chapels are used for storage space.

It is impossible to estimate the influence which this institution has had upon the development of the middle west. Though it appears small now, it was in its early life the center of a great transformation and the opening wedge of our civilization into a pioneer country.

Very little is recorded in available documents regarding the construction and changes of the building itself, though much is told of its influence.

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by Monette.

References: "Transactions of the Illinois State
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Historical Society." No. 31 - 1924
pages 71-78-92
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"Illinois Catholic Historical Review"

Chas. Weiss

Brown Pl. Morphology, Ill.

(Approved) *Wm. E. Gundersen*

Addendum to
Church of the Holy Family
State Route 157
Cahokia
St. Clair County
Illinois

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADDENDUM TO
CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY
State Route 157 (116 Church Street)
Cahokia
St. Clair County
Illinois

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~~PHOTOGRAPHS AND~~

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013

CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY
(Holy Family Parish)
114 Church Street (State Route 157)
Cahokia
St. Clair County
Illinois

HABS NO. ~~IL-1196~~

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PHOTOGRAPHS